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# United States Department of Agriculture,

## BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY,

Seed and Plant Introduction and Distribution,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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### TALL FESCUE (*Festuca elatior*).

Tall fescue is an upright perennial grass resembling so closely the more common meadow fescue that no distinctive botanical differences can be determined. As its name indicates, it is ordinarily taller than the meadow fescue and in general more robust. It does not produce seed so abundantly as meadow fescue, the stems being comparatively few.

Tall fescue was introduced from Europe a number of years ago, but as yet it is of very little importance in this country. One of the principal reasons for its not being more generally grown is that the seed is expensive, and difficulty has been experienced in securing a stand on account of its poor quality. There is very little seed produced in this country, most of it coming from Europe. The legal weight is about 25 pounds to the bushel and the average retail price from 20 to 25 cents per pound. This grass is adapted to a variety of soils and to the same region in general as meadow fescue, but like meadow fescue it does best on soils possessing a considerable amount of humus. Little is known regarding its agricultural value in this country, but it is quite safe to say that it is equally as valuable as meadow fescue, and the Department's tests of the two indicate that tall fescue produces more feed and is in general hardier than meadow fescue. While somewhat coarser than the latter, it appears to be equally palatable and nutritious and is of more value for pasture than for hay.

During the last few years in Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri, meadow fescue has been affected by a rust which frequently damages the seed crop and destroys the aftergrowth. Tall fescue does not appear to be susceptible to the attacks of this rust, which, if true, is a point very much in its favor.

*Culture.*—The methods of seeding this grass are essentially the same as those employed in the case of meadow fescue. In most sections where the winters are cold, and where there is considerable freezing and thawing, causing the ground to heave badly, spring seeding is desirable. If sown in the fall, it is desirable to have the ground plowed in July or August, so that it will have sufficient time to settle before the time for seeding. Just before it is time to sow the grass the surface of the ground should be stirred by a disk harrow or some similar implement, to prepare a good seed bed. Seed may be sown either broadcast or with a press drill, the latter method giving good results. When a drill is used it is well to sow one-half of the seed each way, in order to cover the ground more evenly. On account of the poor quality of the seed now on the market, it is necessary to sow 25 to 30 pounds per acre. If sown broadcast, care should be taken not to cover the seed too deeply.

The most important problems connected with the testing of tall fescue are to determine its value in comparison with the ordinary meadow fescue; also to secure, if possible, strains which produce seed more abundantly, so that it will not be necessary to depend on Europe for our supply; and to learn definitely whether it is susceptible to the attacks of the rust, which is so common on meadow fescue.



